

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Original) A process for producing powder, flakes, or pellets containing α -sulfo fatty acid alkylester salt in high concentrations, said process comprising:

(1) a step of preparing a paste containing α -sulfo fatty acid alkylester salt by a series of reactions of sulfonating a fatty acid alkylester with a sulfonating gas by contact with each other, esterifying the sulfonated product with a lower alcohol, neutralizing the esterified product, and bleaching the neutralized product, to give a paste containing α -sulfo fatty acid alkylester salt;

(2) a step of aging the thus obtained paste;

(3) a step of making the aged paste into flakes or pellets containing equal to or less than 10 wt% of water, or a step of making the aged paste into flakes or pellets containing equal to or less than 10 wt% of water and then crushing the resulting flakes or pellets into a powder having an average particle diameter of 100-1500 μm ; and

(4) a step of aging the powder, flakes, or pellets.

2. (Original) The process as defined in claim 1, which further comprises a step of mixing the powder, flakes, or pellets with an inorganic powder having an average particle diameter of 0.1-100 μm , in an amount of 1-40 wt% of the powder, flakes, or pellets.

3. (Original) The process as defined in claim 1 or 2 wherein the fatty acid alkylester has an iodine value equal to or lower than 1.

4. (Currently Amended) Powder, flakes, or pellets containing α -sulfo fatty acid alkylester salt in high concentrations, which are obtained by the process defined in ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1.

5. (Currently Amended) The process for producing a granular detergent which comprises mixing or granulating the powder, flakes, or pellets obtained by the process defined in ~~any one of Claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 together with a detergent component by any method selected from powder mixing, kneading-crushing, and agitation granulation.

6. (Currently Amended) The process for producing a granular detergent which comprises mixing the powder, flakes, or pellets obtained by the process defined in ~~any one of Claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 together with a detergent component and water, to give a slurry containing 20-50 wt% of water, and spray-drying the slurry.

7. (Original) The process for producing a granular detergent which comprises mixing or granulating the granular detergent obtained by the process defined in claim 5 or 6 further with a detergent component by any method selected from powder mixing, kneading-crushing, and agitation granulation.

8. (Currently Amended) The granular detergent obtained by the process defined in ~~any one of claims 5 to 7~~ claim 5 or 6.

9. (Currently Amended) The process for producing a solid detergent which comprises mixing and kneading the powder, flakes, or pellets obtained by the process defined in ~~any one of claims 1 to 3~~ claim 1 together with a detergent component, to obtain solid detergent.